

# He was a happy child, always seen cracking jokes

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## 'He was a happy child, always seen cracking jokes'

After suspending classes for two days, Bombay Cambridge School speaks to those Andheri teen Manpreet Sahans was close to, decides to conduct workshops on responsible use of technology

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### Turbulent teenage

Cyber psychologist Nirali Bhatia says, "Adolescence is full of challenges, where children go through mood swings, hormonal changes, physical as well as emotional changes... There is a lot of pressure to perform, academically and socially. Kids in this age group act on impulse and are prone to addictive behaviour. They are drawn to instant gratification. Their ability to differentiate between virtual and real is low; so, it's easy for them to fall prey to such challenges or games, either out of curiosity or to escape in the virtual world to cope with other pressures. Therefore, it is important for parents and other support systems to be available for these children. They must be made aware of the dangers existing in the real as well as cyber world. Parents must always keep a soft watch on their wards — any difference in sleep patterns, eating habits, appetite or behaviour should be taken seriously and professional help sought."

EVEN though there isn't any definitive proof yet that Sahans killed himself as part of the Challenge, after talking to his close friends, the school found out that he certainly was big on Internet games. Brilliant in studies and an active participant in the school's basketball and cricket teams, Sahans, they said, had shown no sign of depression. He had not even missed school for anyone to suspect there was something wrong.

### Life a game, gaming his life

"He was a happy child, leading a perfectly normal school life. He was regular in school and did very well in academics as well as extra-curricular activities. He could be found cracking jokes and having fun with his friends. There were no signs of depression at all," said a school official.

"It was only after the incident, when we spoke to his friends, we came to know that he was hooked to online games. But he had become very secretive about what he played and when he played it. Regarding that specific game, the Blue Whale Challenge, however, his close friends said they didn't notice any telltale signs that he was involved in it. So, it cannot



Bombay Cambridge School in Andheri East. PIC/NIMESH DAVE

be said with absolute certainty that that was the reason behind his drastic step.

"The school was equally shocked, and hence, it was only right to give the children a breather to deal with the loss of their dear friend. We kept regular classes aside for a couple of days. However, even before we could speak to the children about it, they were aware of the game," added the official.

"During his friends' counselling sessions, they told us that he used to play online games till late into the night regularly; at times, even till the wee hours. He had even been coaxing some of them to join him in some online football games, generally played only in the night to match clocks of specific countries. But none of

his friends had access to gadgets at night."

### The vulnerable lot

Sahans, the son of a pilot, used to talk about becoming a pilot on growing up passionately and was very knowledgeable about aircraft and trivia.

Talking about how students from Stds VI to IX were the most vulnerable to the addiction of online gaming, a teacher from the school said, "After the incident, we spoke to students of higher classes and what they told us was a revelation. They said they were past that age and that the gaming craze existed only until Std IX."

The school is now planning to hold workshops by experts for the students to explain responsible use of technology.

